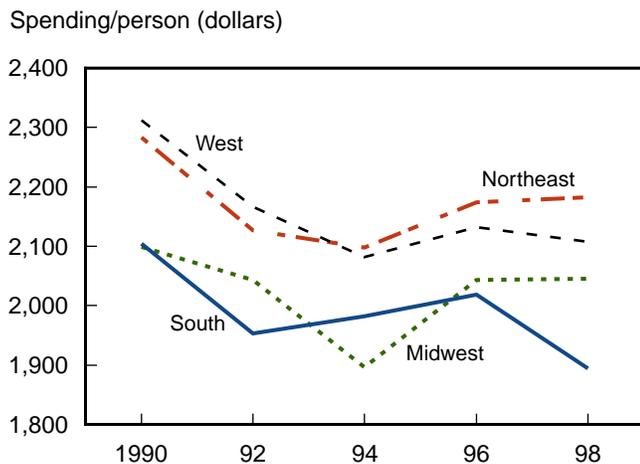


Northeast and West Led in Food Spending

Northeasters spent about \$2,182 or \$75 (3.5 percent) more than westerners, \$137 (7 percent) more than mid-westerners, and \$288 (15 percent) more than southerners on total food in 1998 (fig. 15). People living in the Northeast and West spent the most per person on at-home and away-from-home food (figs. 16 and 17). For example, residents of the Northeast spent \$1,273 on at-home food and \$909 on away-from-home food in 1998, while residents of the West spent \$1,254 at home and \$852 away from home. Southerners spent the least— \$1,123 at home and \$771 away from home.

All households spent less per person on at-home food in 1998 than in 1990 except those in the Midwest, which spent the same. At-home food spending declined about 5 percent in the Northeast and about 9 percent in both the West and the South. Likewise, away-from-home food spending declined for all four regions (fig. 17). From 1990 to 1998, away-from-home expenditures declined about 12 percent in the South. These expenditures fluctuated during 1990-98. For example, per-person away-from-home expenditures in the Northeast were as high as \$942 in 1990 and as low as \$694 in 1994. These fluctuations tended to coincide with increases and decreases in disposable household income. Expenditures on food away from home tend to fluctuate more than expenditures on food at home since food away from home tends to be less of a necessity than food at home.

Figure 15
Total food spending by region

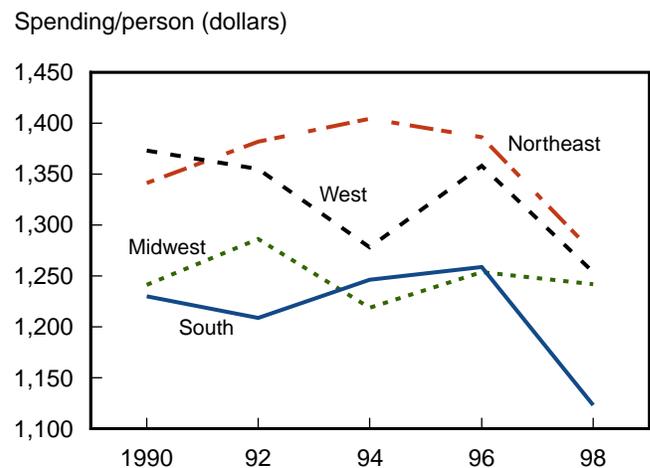


1998 prices.

Source: Economic Research Service from Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Despite the fluctuations in expenditures on food away from home, the share spent on this food category remained constant during 1990-98. Households in all regions spent about 41 percent of their food budget on food away from home in 1990 except those in the South, which spent 42 percent. However, in 1998, food-away-from-home expenditures were 42, 39, 41, and 40 percent for households in the Northeast, Midwest, South, and West, respectively.

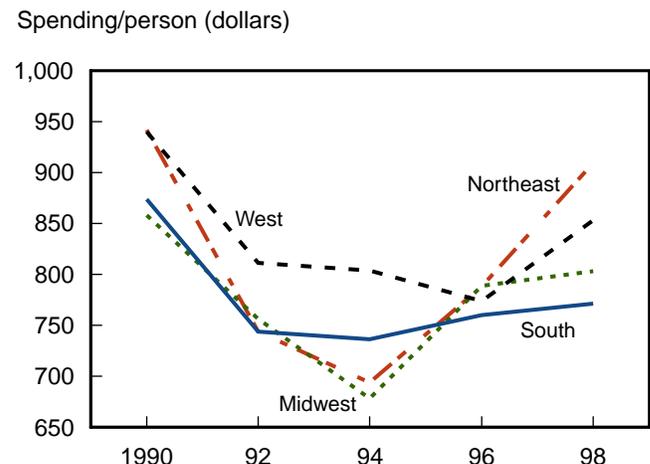
Figure 16
At-home food spending by region



1998 prices.

Source: Economic Research Service from Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Figure 17
Away-from-home food spending by region



1998 prices.

Source: Economic Research Service from Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Some of the differences among regions probably are due to tastes and preferences. But relative prices of food items, which vary across the country, are also an influence. Income differentials, labor force participa-

tion rates, home food production, and the population's racial composition are other factors accounting for regional food spending differences.